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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 000370

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A, S/CR, SCA/PAB
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR HARRIMAN
OSD FOR KIMMITT
CENTCOM FOR CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76, AND POLAD
REL TO NATO/AUS/NZ/ISAF

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [PHUM](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: PRT BAMYAN: SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT ON SECURITY,
POLITICS, ECONOMICS, AND SOCIAL ISSUES

REF: 06KABUL 5654

Classified By: PolCounselor SRosenberry for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) Bamyan continues to enjoy relative peace and security. Development assistance from the U.S. Government is on the rise, almost entirely due to the twelve fold increase in CERP assistance for 2007. On the political front, Governor Sarabi has taken steps to counter criticism from her political opposition, but her position is perhaps slightly weaker now than last summer. While the cost of consumer goods is up roughly 30 percent this quarter, this is to be expected during winter in Bamyan. End Summary.

SECURITY

2. (C) The Bamyan PRT was the second PRT established in Afghanistan in September 2003; it has not suffered an attack in that entire time. While the PRT received credible intelligence in September and October 2006 about a possible RCIED threat against the Police Chief, Governor and/or PRT, security measures were put in place by provincial officials and the PRT to minimize any associated risk. There is no indication that such action is likely now. The environment is classified currently as "semi-permissive" by the PRT.

3. (SBU) Within the province there are local security concerns related to general criminality, such as the likely ongoing movement of drugs through Bamyan. A shipment of just over 1,800 kilos of drugs was seized in the Yakawlang district on October 18. There have been no subsequent seizures.

POLITICAL SITUATION

4. (SBU) This fall there were a number of renewed allegations

against Governor Sarabi (reftel). These complaints generated visits from two Presidential Advisors in September and a delegation from the Ministry of Interior in early November. The complaints primarily focused on the Governor,s inability to garner sufficient development funds from the international community and her inability to manage those under her who are accused of smuggling artifacts. These non-specific and non-substantiated allegations of smuggling have been raised off and on for the last year, and it appears that the opposition comes from a disaffected, and perhaps politically motivated few. To address these criticisms, the Governor has begun monthly radio addresses. She also initiated a government newsletter in January to be distributed throughout the province.

15. (SBU) The Provincial Council has kept a relatively low profile over the last three months. This is perhaps due to their involvement in training and briefings the National Democratic Institute (NDI) has organized for the Council members. Disappointingly, though invited, the Provincial Council has not been an active participant in the development of the Provincial Development Plan. By contrast, almost all of the provincial line ministries have been engaged this quarter in putting together projects for the coming year.

Economic Situation

16. (SBU) The economic situation of the province has changed slightly due to the increased cost (up 30 percent since this summer) of consumer goods. Although the increase is notable, this is a typical yearly trend based on increased difficulty

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obtaining supplies from Kabul in winter. What is normally a nine hour drive from Kabul to Bamyan in summer is frequently 12 hours or more in winter due to treacherous road conditions. These increased transportation costs are passed on directly to Bamyan consumers.

17. (U) According to provincial officials, approximately 80 percent of families are involved in subsistence farming. The primary crops produced in Bamyan are potatoes and wheat, though there are nut and fruit orchards in the Khamard district. According to anecdotal reports from locals, this year,s harvest appeared to be slightly below normal due to some isolated droughts as well as floods. Recently there have been several meetings between Bamyan NGOs and provincial officials regarding humanitarian assistance for as many as 40,000 people (just under 10 percent of the population) this winter.

18. (U) With respect to development, the province has seen a 12 fold increase in the (DOD) Commander,s Emergency Response Program (CERP) funding -- from roughly USD 500,000 last year to just over USD 5.8 million for 2007. This increase is striking since, according to the USAID press office, the projects of USAID (arguably the largest donor in Bamyan, followed by NZAID) total just over USD 10 million from its inception until now. Timing is an issue. Bamyan has a very short construction season, so a number of the projects (schools, health clinics, micro hydro, solar power, and wells to name a few) contracted last fall will not get underway until after March.

19. (U) The governor,s long-term vision of a self-sufficient province is built upon developing tourism for the province. Bamyan is unique in that it contains three UNESCO world heritage sites: the Budda niches; the 'City of Screams' (the fort razed by Genghis Khan); and the caves of the Buddhist monks. The Governor is also pushing to have Band-i-Mir lake listed as an Afghan National Park to raise Bamyan's profile as an attractive destination. While Bamyan does benefit from some tourism, this segment of the economy is not currently producing any meaningful dividends.

¶10. (U) Also of note, are Bamyan,s untapped natural resources (coal, iron ore and possibly silver). Currently there is a small coal mining operation in the Khamard district. Much of the coal it produces is being used to heat homes this winter in surrounding villages.

Cultural/Social Situation

¶11. (SBU) The people of Bamyan live very modest lives. They live on the edge of poverty and natural disasters have serious consequences here, especially if crops are affected. Many people are requesting humanitarian assistance to get through the winter. The province has received very little snow over the last few months, and people are already predicting that there could be serious droughts this coming summer.

¶12. (U) Bamyan has rudimentary schools, many of which are little more than teachers working with a blackboard under tents. CERP and New Zealand AID completed work on a handful of schools last quarter, and they have plans to build an additional two schools in each district next year. Fortunately, in contrast to other provinces, Bamyan schools have not been the targeted by insurgents. Forty-three percent of the students enrolled in primary schools are girls.

¶13. (SBU) Women, such as Governor Sarabi, hold a fair number of key positions within the province, thus women,s rights are discussed fairly regularly. In November the Department of Women,s Affairs (DoWA) held a well-attended conference in honor of the UN Day on Combating Violence Against Women.

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DoWA also organized a discussion with the NGO community regarding the best ways to advance women,s development. The PRT and UNAMA are working with DoWA currently to help it clarify and prioritize its projects within the PDP for 2007.

¶14. (SBU) With respect to human rights, UNAMA has flagged the recent case of the rape of a 15 year-old boy. He was raped repeatedly by four ANP officers and allegedly three civilians. The police arrested and charged their own ANP officers, who were tried and found guilty. The UNAMA human rights officer has questioned the lack of efforts by the police to locate the three civilians also implicated, as well as the fact that the police placed the victim in a juvenile detention center with one of the alleged underage rapists. Two of the alleged civilian rapists are reportedly close relatives of the Bamyan Deputy Chief of Police as well as one of the District Chiefs of Police.

Comment

¶15. (SBU) The Bamyan province is justifiably proud of its security and stability. The people are very supportive of the ISAF forces and believe that our presence directly supports the relative peace that Bamyan enjoys. Overall there have been many positive developments, especially in terms of increased government planning and preparation for the next construction cycle. The governor, however, still has work to do if she is to overcome lost ground with the public resulting from criticism by her opponents.

NEUMANN